

Discussion Topics

Consistency Guidelines

(This page highlights the key areas where Policy Committee endorsement is needed)

Previously Agreed to Key Point:

- Guidelines should ensure that callers will recognize the services as part of a national system yet provide flexibility to implementers at this early stage.

Key Policy Recommendations:

- Voice-based user interface should be used
- Main menu items, “transit information” and “highway information”
- Allow advertising/sponsorship within reason
- No direct linkage to 911, 311 or other N11s
- Design system access for 90th percentile usage at minimum
- State DOTs initiate 511 service planning

The Guidelines will be updates as necessary – This is Version 1.0

511 Basic Service Consistency Guidelines (Launch Model)

Version 1.0

August 2001

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I. Introduction

On March 8, 1999, The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to designate a nationwide three-digit telephone number for traveler information. On July 21, 2000 the FCC designated 511 as the national traveler information number.

The FCC ruling leaves nearly all implementation issues and schedules to state and local agencies and telecommunications carriers. There are no Federal requirements and no mandated way to pay for 511; however, USDOT and FCC expect to see some type of nationwide deployment. In 2005, the FCC will review progress in implementing 511.

While the flexibility provided in the FCC ruling is highly desirable, it also presents a challenge. There is a great deal of interest in using 511 throughout the U.S. It is expected that there will be multiple requests for 511, at least in some parts of the U.S., from DOTs, transit agencies, regional and local transportation agencies, as well as private service providers who will offer to implement 511 services for some sort of compensation. If not thoughtfully planned, 511 services could devolve into an inconsistent set of services widely varying in type, quality, and cost.

511 Deployment Coalition Program

Mindful of both the opportunity and challenge 511 presents, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), in conjunction with many other organizations including the American Public Transit Association (APTA) and the Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITS America), with support from the U.S. Department of Transportation, has established a 511 Deployment Coalition.

The goal of the 511 Deployment Coalition is “the timely establishment of a national 511 traveler information service that is sustainable and provides value to users.” The intent is to implement 511 nationally using a bottom up approach facilitated by information sharing and a cooperative dialogue through the national associations represented on the Policy Committee, the governing body of the program. The mission of the Policy Committee is to provide guidance on how to achieve this goal.

The 511 Deployment Coalition is developing guidelines on content and consistency. A Working Group of managers involved in 511 and traveler information service delivery has been supporting the Policy Committee. The Working Group has studied extensively existing telephone-based traveler information systems and the projected technological, political and economic environments in the near future to develop recommendations for guidelines (see <http://www.its.dot.gov/511/511.htm> for materials developed or used by the Working Group and Policy Committee in its deliberations).

This document provides 511 consistency guidelines.

Purpose of the Guidelines

The 511 Deployment Coalition recognizes that 511 services will be developed in a bottom-up fashion with state and local transportation agencies establishing services in areas and timeframes determined by them. The positive benefits of this approach is that it enables resources from many organizations to be harnessed to deploy 511 as well as providing many opportunities for innovation in 511 service delivery. A potential negative consequence of simultaneous independent actions is that the resulting services do not, from a caller's or national policy perspective, resemble a well-planned consistent service.

To reduce the chances of service confusion and inconsistency, the 511 Deployment Coalition is establishing guidelines in the areas of content and consistency. ***511 service consistency will be established through implementers following these guidelines, and as an increasing number of services were established, a national 511 service would emerge.***

These guidelines are designed from a customer-centric viewpoint while being sensitive to the issues of those agencies that must gather and prepare information and manage information service provision. The 511 Deployment Coalition is very cognizant of the reality that if we don't develop quality systems, the transportation industry may lose the privilege of the number. On the other hand, if guidelines suggest services that are cost-prohibitive and unsupportable, the result could be few operating systems, also leading to losing the privilege of the number.

The transportation industry has been afforded a tremendous opportunity to better serve its customers. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist transportation agencies in establishing this customer service in the best possible manner.

II. Guidelines Overview

511 service consistency is important for at least two reasons:

1. In its order, the FCC “encourage[s] federal, state, and local government transportation agencies to work cooperatively to ensure that the transportation information provided using 511 is appropriate to the national scope of our designation and the scarcity of the N11 public resource.” ***In other words, the FCC expects the transportation industry to deliver a consistent 511 service nationally.***
2. With the possibility for the first time of dialing the same number for information in multiple regions, consumers could expect similar service in regions served by different systems. In fact, callers could be completely unaware that 511 services are separate systems. ***In other words, callers could expect and even demand consistency of 511 services.***

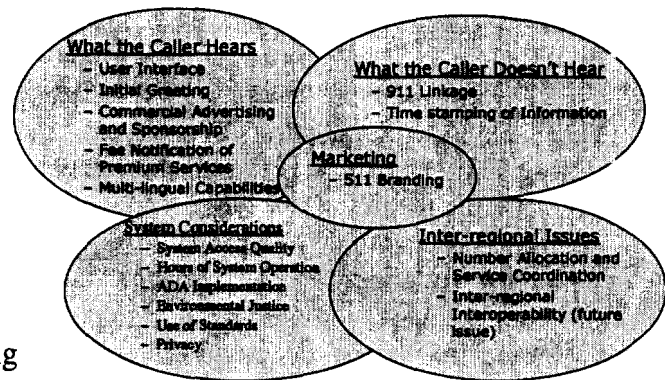
To provide implementers a blueprint as to what they can do to maximize service consistency, the 511 Deployment Coalition has developed these Consistency Guidelines. These guidelines represent the culmination of nearly a year long process and have been developed based on a philosophy of providing flexibility to implementers at this early stage while ensuring that callers will recognize the services as part of a national system. While the Coalition desires a consistent national service and image, it was recognized that it may take time for early implementations to evolve to being completely consistent. But the need for the “look and feel” of basic 511 services to be the same no matter where a customer accesses the service is of utmost importance.

These guidelines are written to balance these twin desires of implementation flexibility and consistent caller experience.

III. Consistency Guidelines

16 issues, grouped into 5 logical categories comprise the guidelines. These categories are:

- What the caller hears
- What the caller doesn't hear
- System considerations
- Marketing
- Inter-regional issues



These categories are used as a tool for presenting the 16 issues in logical groupings. These category heading have no special meaning in and of themselves.

In this section each issue will be briefly described and the recommended guidance will be provided. Appendix A contains short background papers that have been developed for each issue describing the issue, the options and the rationale further, as well as providing or referencing additional supporting information.

1. What the Caller Hears

1.1. User Interface

Issue: The ease and methods of access callers have to desired information once a call is initiated.

Guideline: Implementers are encouraged to use voice recognition as the primary user interface. For voice activated systems, the following top-level commands should be used when a system has the relevant information available (*this is based upon the current draft content guidelines*): “Transit Information”, “Highway Information”, “Airport Information”, “Rail Station Information” and “Ferry Information”. Top-level menu commands beyond the basic services are acceptable. Care should be taken when adding additional top-level commands to select descriptive terms and not to conflict with the basic terms noted here.

Systems that utilize keypad entry for navigation should use the following top-level menu tree: 1 for “transit information”, 2 for “highway information” and 9 for “help using the system”. Although not defined as part of the basic content package, 3 should be reserved for “airport and other major terminal and transportation facility information.” Systems that use both keypad entry and voice activation should allow callers to press or say the top-level number (“press or say 1 for transit conditions”).

Overly complicated menu trees should be avoided. Systems should not require the user to make more than 3 entries or replies before providing the desired information. At each level, no more than 6 options should be listed.

“Shortcuts” are used often by repeat callers that know what element of information they are seeking. The use of shortcuts is encouraged. It is possible that a future update of these guidelines could include specific guidance on shortcut methods, but no detailed guidance is given at present.

511 systems should offer more than a single pre-recorded message.

1.2. Initial Greeting

Issue: What the caller hears upon starting a call.

Guideline: Based on focus groups, the initial greeting should be very short, such as "Welcome to (metro area's, state's, or program name's) 511 for Traveler Information." Customers expect a short verification that they dialed correctly, but comment that they do not want a lengthy introduction or long formal enunciation of agency names. Supplemental information such as website addresses or complete help instructions should not be included in the initial greeting but provided through menu selections. In the cases of major emergencies, an emergency message can be provided prior to or in place of the normal initial greeting.

1.3. Commercial Advertising and Sponsorship

Issue: The parameters that should be used when a 511 service included commercial advertising and/or sponsorship.

Guideline: Commercial advertising and sponsorship of 511 services, either in an initial greeting or in conjunction with a specific element of a 511 service is acceptable. However, care should be given to ensure that the length of messages does not overly inconvenience callers and that the content of messages are consistent with the public service nature of 511. This guidance applies to the initial greeting and messages prior to the caller getting the information they are seeking.

1.4. Fee Notification of Premium Services

Issue: informing callers when they are seeking fee-based information or services.

Guideline: If a 511 service offers premium content – content beyond the basic content – options for accessing this content should be provided after basic content access options. If offered for a fee, callers must be informed when they have selected a premium content or service and what the cost of the content or service is prior to usage. Callers must opt-in before charges are incurred.

1.5. Multi-lingual Capabilities

Issue: access to 511 services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) callers.

Guideline: 511 Implementers should review Executive Order 13166, signed by President Clinton August 11, 2000 and the supporting “Guidance to Recipients on Special Language Service to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Beneficiaries” issued by U.S. DOT January 22, 2001 to determine its applicability.

2. What the Caller Does Not Hear

2.1. 911 Linkage

Issue: How 511 services should provide linkage to 911 services.

Guideline: Due to the cost and complexity of location determination and current legal prohibitions on sharing location information, 511 should not be directly linked to 911. If a system chooses to inform callers that they have not dialed 911, the message should be a brief, "if this is an emergency, please hang up and dial 911."

2.2 Timestamping of Information

Issue: Providing time/date identifier to provide callers with sense of reliability and accuracy of the information provided.

Guideline: Caller expectations are for timely information. If a 511 system provides basic content quality as defined in the content guidelines, then timestamping the information is unnecessary and undesirable. If a system knowingly provides information that is updated not as conditions change, but based upon a periodic schedule, then the schedule should be communicated to callers in association with the particular message.

3. System Considerations

3.1. System Access Quality

Issue: The ability of the telephone system to reliably and quickly answer calls.

Guideline: 511 systems should be sized to accept all calls for the 90th percentile peak hour load. If live operators are utilized or connected to as part of a 511 service, 90th percentile wait time should not exceed 90 seconds, and callers should receive indications that they are on hold. 511 services should have an availability to callers of 99.8% (out of service less than 18 hours a year). System performance against these parameters should be measured and monitored.

3.2. Hours of System Operation

Issue: The days and hours 511 service should be available to callers.

Guideline: 511 systems should be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is recognized that systems will not always be "operated" 24/7. In instances when the system is providing static, pre-recorded messages, systems should inform the caller that it is outside normal operating hours.

3.3. ADA Implementation

Issue: Complying with accessibility laws and regulations.

Guideline: 511 implementers need to consider that under Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, carriers and equipment manufacturers must provide access to and make their services and products usable by individuals with disabilities, "if readily achievable." Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits public entities (states, local governments, and any department, agency, or other instrumentality of state or local government) from discriminating against those with disabilities in all services that they provide to the public. 511 implementers should include in their design plans how they intend to provide access to these services to the disabled community, such as through the carriers' existing TRS or TDD capabilities.

3.4. Environmental Justice

Issue: The relationship of 511 and environmental justice principals that prevent discrimination against minority and low-income populations.

Guideline: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and a 1994 Presidential Executive Order address the Federal governments responsibilities to assure that programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance adhere to environmental justice principals that prevent discrimination against minority and low-income populations. 511 services that use Federal funds must adhere to these rules.

3.5. Standards

Issue: 511 and National ITS standards.

Guideline: Significant resources have been invested to develop ITS standards that will simplify and expedite the deployment of interoperable systems. 511 implementers should review the full range of standards available and consider using those that will aid in cost-effective system development and/or inter-system interoperability.

3.6. Privacy

Issue: Privacy protections for callers.

Guideline: 511 services should adhere to ITS America's Fair Information and Privacy Principles.

4. Marketing

4.1. 511 Branding

Issue: the creation of a brand identity for 511 services to manage consumer expectations.

Guideline: The 511 designation is a brand like "Intel inside." Local implementations of 511 should incorporate whatever collateral (greeting, logos, signage, etc.) the national effort develops in conjunction with the local ATIS brand that is being marketed. 511 callers must realize that the local 511 implementation is part of a national program with certain requirements for quality and content.

5. Inter-regional Issues

5.1. Number Allocation and Service Coordination

Issue: Organizing and coordinating transportation agencies in a given region to determine what 511 services will be offered, by whom and in what geographic area(s).

Guideline: State Departments of Transportation should accept the lead facilitating role for planning how 511 services will evolve in their state. In this role, state DOTs should work closely and in partnership with other transportation operators in their state. State DOTs should also lead coordination efforts with the state's public utilities or service commission. In regions where multi-state cooperation is logical, state DOTs should coordinate with one another so that service regions make sense to callers.

5.2. Inter-regional Interoperability

Issue: How 511 services interconnect.

Guideline: This issue has been flagged as a future issue, but one in which a guideline cannot be established at this time

IV. Monitoring and Updating the Guidelines

These consistency guidelines are designated as version 1.0. The 511 Deployment Coalition recognizes that these guidelines are needed and desired as soon as possible by implementers to establish systems that adhere to these guidelines. However, until practical experience is gained through deployment and use, some areas of these guidelines – some things that are in the guidelines and some things that have been omitted – may require modification or clarification.

The Deployment Coalition plans to continue to monitor and review the guidelines, producing updates as warranted.

If implementers have suggestions for improvements, please provide this information electronically to “511feedback@aashto.org”.

Appendix A – Issue Background Papers

ISSUE 1.1: USER INTERFACE

A. Issue Definition

This issue addresses the ease of access callers have to desired information once a call is initiated.

B. Recommended Guideline

Implementers are encouraged to consider voice recognition as the primary user interface. For voice activated systems, the following top-level commands should be used when a system has the relevant information available: “Transit Information”, “Highway Information”, “Airport Information”, “Rail Station Information” and “Ferry Information”. Top-level menu commands beyond the basic services are acceptable. However, care should be taken when adding additional top-level commands to select descriptive terms that do not conflict with the basic terms noted here.

Systems that utilize keypad entry for navigation should use the following top-level menu tree: 1 for “transit information,” 2 for “highway information” and 9 for “Help.” Although not defined as part of the basic content package, 3 should be reserved for “airport and other major terminal and transportation facility information.” Systems that use both keypad entry and voice activation should allow callers to press or say the top-level number (“press or say 1 for transit conditions”).

Overly complicated menu trees should be avoided. Systems should not require the user to make more than 3 entries or replies before providing the desired information. At each level, no more than 6 options should be listed.

511 systems should not offer only a single pre-recorded message.

“Shortcuts” can be used by repeat callers who know what element of information they are seeking. The use of keypad and voice-activated shortcuts is encouraged. It is possible that a future update of these guidelines could include specific guidance on shortcut methods, but no detailed guidance is given at present.

C. Discussion

a. Issue

User interface is often the first issue discussed in the context of 511 service consistency. There are several elements to this issue, including

- *Menu trees*: This is the term commonly used to refer to systems that scroll through menu options (“press 1 for transit, 2 for traffic”, etc.). Note that not all systems today have a menu tree. Instead a user must listen for their

information as part of a single long message. *Should every system have a menu tree? Should there be a standard top-level menu tree? Should the menu tree structure beyond the top-level be consistent (e.g., should systems have a common navigation menu for transit-related information)?*

- *Voice Commands:* Increasingly, systems are offering callers the option to say “transit” instead of hitting the keypad. In some cases, the option is either to press or say the number (“press or say 1 for transit”), in others, the option is to say the category of information desired (“say traffic”). *Should consistent terms for content categories be established? Should those terms be used as voice enabled commands? Should all systems offer voice enabled commands?*
- *Shortcuts:* Some systems offer the ability to directly access a route, or an agency, by using a shortcut command such as 17# for I-17 in Arizona, or 91* for METRO bus information in Cincinnati. *Should a consistent format for shortcuts be established? Should shortcuts be part of all systems? Should shortcuts be available in voice commands in addition to numerical entry?*

b. Options considered

The Coalition has considered three approaches to this issue at the national level:

- *Be Silent* – Continue to leave complete flexibility regarding menu designs with 511 implementers, as has been the case with pre-511 systems.
- *Establish top-level Guidelines* – Target consistency at the top-level of the user interface of each system and establish general principles and practices for the user interface, leaving detailed implementation decisions below this top-level to implementers.
- *Create 511 user interface standards* – Develop detailed standards such that all 511 systems have essentially the same user interface, varying only if content categories are different.

c. Conclusions

User interface is perhaps the most important consistency issue facing 511 implementers (imagine going to McDonalds that have completely different menus and methods of placing orders). The Coalition has determined that a single access number, 511, leading to multiple systems requires steps towards user interface consistency that were not previously necessary.

However, given the relative immaturity of 511, the Coalition is not currently in favor of creating a standard user interface. The result of such an effort would likely overlook the kind of innovation that often occurs at this stage of system implementation.

The Coalition believes that the most prudent near-term approach is the establishment of top-level guidelines. Given the complexity of the user interface issue, these guidelines are rather lengthy and in multiple parts, but adhere to the underlying philosophy of establishing top-level consistency for callers, while also creating an interface that is intuitive and easy to navigate. These recommended guidelines are based upon implementation experience both in traveler information systems and general telephone-based information systems.

The Coalition will continue to bring implementers together to share information on user interface methods. This will enable implementers to quickly adopt successful practices – and move away from unsuccessful practices – of other systems. By continuing to focus on user interface, the Coalition is also in a position to assess whether more extensive guidelines or possible standardization is required.

d. Additional Information

Utah DOT has commissioned the most detailed and up-to-date examination to date of 511 user interface design methods. This User Interface Specification, prepared by the Georgia Tech Research Institute's Electronic System Laboratory, provides excellent examples of detailed design guidelines that are consistent with the Coalition's recommended guideline.

This information will be inserted...

ISSUE 1.2: INITIAL GREETING

A. Issue Definition

This issue addresses the greeting a caller hears upon connecting to a 511 service.

B. Recommended Guideline

Based on focus groups, the initial greeting should be very short, such as "Welcome to (metro area's, state's, or program name's) 511 for Traveler Information." Customers expect a short verification that they dialed correctly, but comment that they do not want a lengthy introduction or long formal enunciation of agency names. Supplemental information such as website addresses or complete help instructions should not be included in the initial greeting, but provided through menu selections. In the cases of major emergencies, an emergency message can be provided prior to or in place of the normal initial greeting.

C. Discussion

a. Issue

As the saying goes, "first impressions are everything." The trick is to confirm to callers that they have reached what they dialed, or if they are unsure of what they dialed, they are made aware quickly, without taking so long that callers become confused, bored or annoyed.

With 511, callers can dial the same number and get different systems depending on their location. These systems could differ in terms of the types of information provided and/or the region covered.

Further, some existing phone services not presently accessible by 511 use their initial greeting to communicate to callers the names of agency sponsors and other similar information. In essence, using the phone service greeting as a marketing tool for the agency.

These competing desires must be balanced so that callers understand what they have called and do not receive completely inconsistent greetings from different 511 systems. A bad greeting on one system will reflect poorly on all 511 systems.

b. Options considered

The Coalition has considered a few options with regard to this issue:

- Say nothing – leave complete flexibility for greeting design to 511 implementers

- Standardize all or part of the initial greeting – Establish a script that all systems would use, filling in the blanks pertaining to the specific situation where appropriate.
- Develop guidelines for greetings, but do not specify a standard greeting – focus on key elements that should – and should not – be included in the greeting, but leave final decisions as to what will and won't be in the greeting up to implementers.

c. Conclusions

The Coalition has determined that providing guidance on the key elements of the initial greeting is the best approach. The following elements are addressed in the guidance:

- Keep the message short – if a system wants to provide more information to callers on system sponsors, how the information is gathered, etc., the system should have a “more information” section.
- Describe in general terms the region served by the system – again, 511 can be dialed anywhere. Consequently, the caller will not automatically know what service area they can obtain information from. The greeting must provide this.
- Include 911 reference. See guideline 2.1 for further information.
- Emergency messages are ok and should be used in conjunction with or in place of the initial greeting when appropriate at the discretion of the system operator.

d. Additional Information

Excerpt of transcript from recent 511 focus groups in Utah to be added that show desire to keep greeting short.

ISSUE 1.3 COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP

A. Issue Definition

This issue addresses the parameters that should be used when a 511 service included commercial advertising and/or sponsorship.

B. Recommended Guideline

Commercial advertising and sponsorship of 511 services, either in an initial greeting or in conjunction with a specific element of a 511 service is acceptable. Implementers that have funding concerns and limitations should consider advertising and/or sponsorship methods to defray a portion of system costs. However, care should be given to ensure that the length of messages does not overly inconvenience callers and that the content of messages are consistent with the public service nature of 511. This guidance applies to the initial greeting and messages prior to the caller getting the information they are seeking.

C. Discussion

a. Issue

Given that there is only a certain amount of financial assistance available for the initiation of 511 information services, it is quite possible that the local government entities deploying these services will need to seek out additional sources of funding to supplement public sector resources. As research indicates that there is at best only a marginal consumer willingness to pay for most traveler information services, charging users for basic access to the service appears unlikely to provide sufficient revenue to ensure any degree of sustainability.

In contrast, advertisements, sponsorships or connections to value-added services (e.g., options could be available to make a taxi reservation, with the taxi firm providing a fee to the phone system operator for the connection) are possible approaches for generating revenue to support the system. However, a scenario could occur in which there is wide variance in the approaches to generating these revenues. Thus, the result could be greetings of widely varying lengths, and an uneven approach to connections to extra services. *Should there be any limitations or guidelines associated with advertising or sponsorship? Should connections to value-added or premium services be encouraged or discouraged?*

In order to demonstrate the potential for mischief stemming from implementation of embedded advertising and sponsorship within 511 services, the following list of potential problem areas has been developed:

- Potential for uneven service – the possibility exists that callers could experience wildly different wait times to gain access to the actual service

depending on the agreements that various 511 implementers make with their commercial sponsors. As pointed out by Jane Lappin in her paper “What We Have Learned About Advanced Traveler Information Systems and Customer Satisfaction?” “Because phone service users are frequently phoning from the road, they require fast and easy access to information. ...Advertising, which appears on some telephone ATIS services just before the traffic information is provided, interferes with the speed of information delivery and irritates customers.”

- Differences in connection to extra services – depending on the structure of the agreements made with commercial sponsors, various implementers might develop vastly divergent approaches for accessing these “extra” services (e.g. the taxi reservation system described above). Major differences between systems might confuse commuters, potentially leading some of them to forego use of the system altogether.
- Differences in fee structures for premium services - differences in the value of the revenue stream stemming from commercial sponsorship could result in some 511 implementers being able to provide additional “premium” services at a much lower (or for free) cost than implementers who have not had the same sort of marketing success. Such differences in level of service could result in complaints from users who find themselves paying more for “premium” services than users within another implementer’s jurisdiction.
- Consistency with customer expectations – given that the primary purpose of 511 is to provide nationwide access to traveler (and related) information, implementers should remind themselves that the content of advertising and development of links to external services are consistent with the public service nature of 511. Unrelated or inappropriate advertising might have a deleterious effect on users’ opinion of the system and 511 services in general.

b. Options considered

From a consistency perspective, there are at least three options to address this issue:

- *Remain Silent* - provide no guidance concerning this issue, allowing development of embedded advertising prior to the services’ initial greeting and messages prior to the caller getting the information they are seeking to occur without outside guidance – this option does not seem very attractive given the potential problems described above.
- *Prohibit all advertising* - recommend that local implementers do not utilize advertisements and the dissemination of other kinds of corporate

messages that might interfere with operation of the 511 service – this option conflicts with the idea that the Deployment Coalition should provide local implementers with flexibility in selecting a business model.

- *Develop guidelines* – provide guidance to local 511 implementers concerning the manner in which advertising and other corporate sponsorship information impacts consumer interface with and use of the system, otherwise providing flexibility concerning implementation of the selected business models.

c. Conclusions

The Coalition supports the need for the development of guidelines concerning the manner in which advertising and other corporate messages impact consumer interface with and use of the system (Option 2). Excessive, inappropriate, or poorly situated advertising could diminish consumer interest in the system and tarnish the reputation of 511 services in general. Although we recognize that most local implementers will exercise prudence in selecting the type and placement of advertising that is embedded in their systems, the potential consequences on other 511 services (both regionally and nationally) of injudiciously developed advertising policies suggests that some level of guidance is appropriate.

Note that while the discussion has focused on commercial-oriented advertising and sponsorship, it also applies to public service announcements (PSAs), which are also acceptable on 511 services, subject to these guidelines.

d. Additional Information

Excerpt of transcript from recent 511 focus groups in Utah to be added that show people do not like distractions.

ISSUE 1.4: FEE NOTIFICATION OF PREMIUM SERVICES

A. Issue Definition

This issue addresses informing callers when they are seeking fee-based information or services.

B. Recommended Guideline

If a 511 service offers premium content – content beyond the basic content – options for accessing this content should be provided after basic content access options. If offered for a fee, callers must be informed when they have selected a premium content or service and what the cost of the content or service is prior to usage. Callers must opt-in before charges are incurred.

C. Discussion

a. Issue

As discussed in the Basic Service Content Guidelines, one of the primary responsibilities of 511 implementers will be to provide high quality content to callers, in particular focusing on the following parameters: accuracy, timeliness, and reliability. Failure to provide customers with the sort of data that meets their basic expectations is almost certain to result in a backlash against both the 511 service provider itself, as well as having broader, national consequences for 511 as a whole. Furthermore, the provision of “premium” content beyond the basic content that is available at no charge to the user is likely to have some sort of fee structure attached to it.

In many ways, this issue is analogous to “slamming” – the practice of switching consumer’s telephone service without permission. Slamming is a serious issue for the FCC, so much so that explicit federal rules have been established to penalize offenders. If callers to 511 are charged for services without realizing they were incurring a fee, callers will be in much the same position as those that have been slammed – seeking redress after the fact. Clearly, 511 services should not be exposed to the potential negative backlash of being equated with slamming.

To provide an example of how implementers might approach this problem, the following examples are suggested for how they might structure their systems menu’s.

b. Options considered

From a consistency perspective, there are several options to address this issue:

- Provide no guideline concerning how users gain access to fee based services, possibly allowing 511 implementers to charge for premium services without first notifying callers
- Provide consistency guidelines concerning how users gain access to fee based services – the only logical legal approach
- Recommend that local implementers confine themselves to the provision of only basic (free) services, thereby pre-empting situations where fees could be charged – this conflicts with giving local implementers business model flexibility.

c. Conclusions

The Coalition strongly suggests that a consensus be reached concerning how users of 511 are able to gain access to fee-based services. The potential legal problems that could stem from the inadequate notification of callers regarding charges for fee based services are too easy to imagine and could have wide ranging consequences not just for the local implementer in question, but 511 services nationwide. Additionally, attempting to restrict local implementers from providing value added services goes against the very concept of providing guidelines and not regulations.

The Coalition recommends that any fee structure be clearly explained to users prior to their being assessed a charge for use of these services. In fact, systems should be designed so that users will be required to “opt-in” to fee-based services prior to their gaining access to them. Failure to implement such precautions could result in callers believing that 511 implementers do not “deal honestly with users,” consequently resulting in a backlash similar in nature to that described above.

When automated menu systems are utilized, basic (free) information (e.g., transit schedules, freeway traffic conditions, rideshare information, etc.) should be accessible from the very front of the menu. In contrast, access to value added traveler and/or other premium (e.g. personalized) services should be placed closer to the end. Implementation of such an approach should serve to both reduce public service connect time/costs, as well as to better enable users to more easily differentiate between basic and premium services. Even so, decisions concerning which premium services are available and the fees charged for them should be made by local implementers based on the business/financing model used by the ATIS.

As voice recognition technology replaces keypad-entry based menus, care should be taken to verify that the consumer is knowingly requesting a premium service. For example, the system could be programmed to inform the consumer that their

selection has a fee attached and then requesting they verify that this is the service choice they wanted.

However, decisions concerning which services are premium, the costs to callers for these services, and how these services fit into the scope of 511 content, should be left to local implementers.

ISSUE 1.5: MULTI-LINGUAL CAPABILITIES

A. Issue Definition

This issue refers to access to 511 services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) callers.

B. Recommended Guideline

511 Implementers should review Executive Order 13166, established August 11, 2000 and the supporting “Guidance to Recipients on Special Language Service to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Beneficiaries” issued by U.S. DOT January 22, 2001 to determine its applicability.

C. Discussion

a. Issue

In August 2000, an Executive Order was established to improve access to federal programs for persons who, on the basis of national origin, have limited English proficiency (Executive Order 13166 - August 11, 2000). This Executive Order applies to all programs that receive federal financial assistance. Each agency, including the Federal Communications Commission and the US Department of Transportation, are required to develop agency-specific guidelines for implementing these new requirements.

As of January 22, 2001, the US DOT issued Guidance to Recipients on Special Language Service to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Beneficiaries. Limited-English-proficient persons are individuals with a primary or home language other than English who must, due to limited fluency in English, communicate in that primary or home language if the individuals are to have an equal opportunity to participate effectively in or benefit from any aid, service or benefit provided by the transportation provider or other DOT recipient.

Recipients of US DOT funding must take reasonable steps to ensure “meaningful access” to DOT recipients' programs and activities. The key to providing meaningful access to LEP persons is to ensure that recipients and LEP beneficiaries can communicate effectively and act appropriately based on that communication. Recipients are required to take reasonable steps to eliminate barriers to meaningful communication with LEP individuals and to provide necessary services equivalent to those provided to people who are fully English proficient.

What "reasonable steps" should be taken will depend upon the following factors:

- Number and proportion of LEP persons potentially served by the recipient's program or activities, and the variety of languages spoken in the recipient's service area.

- The importance of the effect of the recipient's program or activity on LEP persons, bearing in mind that transportation is considered an essential service to participate in modern society.
- The resources available to the recipient, and whether the recipient has budgeted for provision of special language services.
- The level of services provided to the fully English proficient people.
- Whether LEP persons are being excluded from services or being provided a lower level of services.
- Whether the recipient has adequate justification for restrictions, if any, on special language services or speaking languages other than English.

Special language services for first responder, emergency and public safety services should be delivered without noticeable delay. Language issues are sometimes local issues due to matters of usage, dialect, and local preference.

b. Options considered

511 implementers may chose to comply with Executive Order 13166 by utilizing the multilingual capabilities of the carriers.

c. Conclusions

If 511 implementers receive Federal funds for their implementations, then they must review Executive Order 13166, signed by President Clinton August 11, 2000 and the supporting “Guidance to Recipients on Special Language Service to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Beneficiaries” issued by U.S. DOT January 22, 2001 to determine its applicability.

d. Additional Information

Attached is a synopsis of the DOT Guidance to Recipients on Special Language Service to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Beneficiaries

Synopsis of DOT Guidance to Recipients on Special Language Service to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Beneficiaries¹

The U.S. Department of Transportation published policy guidance on Title VI's prohibition against national origin discrimination as it affects limited English proficient persons. This guidance is effective immediately. Comments must be submitted on or before March 23, 2001. DOT will review all comments and will determine what modifications to the policy guidance, if any, are necessary.

Limited-English-proficient persons are individuals with a primary or home language other than English who must, due to limited fluency in English, communicate in that primary or home language if the individuals are to have an equal opportunity to participate effectively in or benefit from any aid, service or benefit provided by the transportation provider or other DOT recipient.

Meaningful Access

Recipients must take reasonable steps to ensure "meaningful access to DOT recipients' programs and activities. The key to providing meaningful access to LEP persons is to ensure that recipients and LEP beneficiaries can communicate effectively and act appropriately based on that communication.

Recipient are required to take reasonable steps to eliminate barriers to meaningful communication with LEP individuals and to provide necessary services equivalent to those provided to people who are fully English proficient. What "reasonable steps" should be taken will depend upon the following factors:

- Number and proportion of LEP persons potentially served by the recipient's program or activities, and the variety of languages spoken in the recipient's service area. The steps that are reasonable for a recipient whose program or activities affects one LEP person per year will be different for a recipient who affects many LEP persons on a regular basis. DOT encourages recipients whose program or activities affect very few LEP persons on an infrequent basis to consider reasonable steps for involvement of LEP persons and to plan for situations in which LEP persons will be affected under the program or activity in question.

The frequency with which LEP persons are affected by the programs or activities.

This is a synopsis of the guidance that the U.S. Department of Transportation published in the Federal Register on January 22, 2001. This document is a synopsis of most of the items covered in the guidance and is not as complete as the guidance. For a copy of the guidance see http://152.119.239.10/docimages/pdf58/121056_web.pdf.

- The importance of the effect of the recipient's program or activity on LEP persons, bearing in mind that transportation is considered an essential service to participate in modern society.
- The resources available to the recipient, and whether the recipient has budgeted for provision of special language services.²

The level of services provided to the fully English proficient people.

- Whether LEP persons are being excluded from services or being provided a lower level of services.

- Whether the recipient has adequate justification for restrictions, if any, on special language services or speaking languages other than English.³

Effective Language Assistance Program

DOT has determined that effective language assistance programs usually address each of the elements described below:

- *Needs Assessment.* A recipient should conduct a thorough assessment of language needs of communities affected by the recipient. Specifically, DOT encourages recipients to identify linguistically isolated populations or job sites in which LEP persons represent a significant portion of the workforce.
- *Written Language Assistance Plan.* Such a plan should include policies and procedures for identifying and assessing the language assistance options, periodic training of staff, actual provision of services and monitoring of the program.
 - o Staff Training. Disseminate the recipient's policy to all employees likely to have contact with LEP persons and periodically train employees.

² The totality of the recipient's circumstances will be considered including the size of the budget of the largest organizational entity that supervises the work of the program, project or activity that directly receives DOT financial assistance. For example, for a unit of the state DOT, the budget of the entire state DOT will be used as a point of reference. Other considerations include the size of the LEP population, the degree to which such populations have been historically excluded from such services, the availability of less costly alternatives, whether the costs can be amortized over time, whether service can be phased in over time, the possibility of alternative sources of funds, and how long the recipient has been on notice that the special language services should be provided.

³ Such justifications would be rare. Safety justifications would generally not be accepted unless accompanied by statistical and/or scientific causality studies and evidence showing a positive correlation between limited English proficiency and crash and death/injury rates at rates substantially higher than would be expected due to chance.

- o Special Language Assistance. This should include notification of the availability of services free of charge, posting signs in regularly encountered non-English languages in waiting rooms, reception areas and other initial point of entry, translation of application forms and instructional, informational and other written materials, uniform procedures for telephone communication between staff and LEP persons, notice of availability of free language services in brochures, booklets, outreach and recruitment materials.
- o Monitoring. The recipient should regularly monitor current LEP demographics, current communication needs of LEP communities, whether the recipient's plan is adequately supported, analyze complaints or grievances alleging lack of services for LEP persons, knowledge of recipient staff about LEP policies and procedures.

Ways of Providing Language Services

The guidance discusses three methods of providing these services: oral interpretation; written translation;

and alternative, non-verbal methods.

Vital documents, those that contain information that is critical for obtaining federal services and or benefits or is required by law, should be translated when a significant number or percentage of population eligible to be served, or likely to be directly affected needs services or information in non-English language to communicate effectively.

DOT recognizes that it would be impossible from a practical and cost-based perspective to translate every piece of outreach material. However, the recipient should continually survey/assess the needs of eligible service populations to determine whether critical outreach materials should be translated.

Application of this Guidance

A recipient should have a grievance or complaint procedure. Also, a recipient should conduct LEP community outreach and education. Transportation plans should identify how the needs of LEP persons will be met where a significant number of such persons can be reasonably expected to need transportation services.

The extent of the service area will in part determine the number or percent of the covered population. This population includes those who may potentially be served by the recipient.

Special language services for first responder, emergency and public safety services should be delivered without noticeable delay.

Signage along highways presents a very difficult LEP topic. At least one state DOT reported that some LEP persons may not have the ability to read variable message signs that alert them to dangerous driving conditions. DOT recommends that recipients explore the possibility of either using pictorial or symbol messages or translating messages into frequently encountered languages on variable message signs that report dangerous driving conditions.

Low literacy, non-literacy, use of non-written languages, blindness and deafness among LEP populations can affect responsibilities of recipients. A non-written language precludes the translation of documents, but does not affect the responsibility of the recipient to communicate the vital information contained in the document or to provide notice of the availability of oral translation according to the size of that language group.

Language issues are sometimes local issues due to matters of usage, dialect, and local preference. Recipients should field test translations with different local language populations to ensure effective communications.

Method to provide special language services that do not segregate should be used whenever possible.

When a LEP individual does not speak a language spoken by a significant number or proportion of the population seeks services or information from a recipient, the recipient should make reasonable efforts to meet the particularized needs of that individual.

A general customer or service survey by a recipient should include participation of people who are LEP.